

# ***Study on the Characteristics and Causes of Ceramic Decoration Art of Jiexiu Kiln in Song and Jin Dynasties***

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**Abstract:** Jiexiu kiln is located in the city of Jiexiu, Shanxi, is one of the important kilns in Shanxi and even the entire northern region, with a long history and unique cultural connotations. In the Song and Jin dynasties, jiexiu kiln ceramics production of a wide variety, in the unique regional environment and cultural atmosphere, jiexiu kiln ceramic decoration of the subject matter, layout and aesthetic style show obvious regional characteristics, through the analysis of jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative art characteristics, it is not difficult to find that jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative art by the social customs of that time, the other art disciplines and fashionable aesthetic ideas of the influence of the different degrees Through the analysis of the characteristics of jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative art, it is easy to find that jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative art was influenced by the social customs of the time, other art disciplines and fashionable aesthetic ideas to varying degrees, which formed a practical, elegant, dynamic, free, bright and simple decorative style, leaving a valuable treasure for future generations.

**Keywords:** Jiexiu kiln, Ceramics, Pattern characteristics, Decorative art.

## **1. Introduction**

Jiexiu kiln, located in today's Shanxi Jinzhong Jiexiu city, is one of the important kilns in Shanxi and even the northern region. Jiexiu kiln was created in the Tang Dynasty, through the Northern Song Dynasty, Jin, Yuan, Ming, Qing and Republic of China, in the Jin Dynasty unprecedented prosperity. At present, jiexiu kiln found two kilns, one is located in Hongshan Town, the other is located in jiexiu city south street. We usually say that the Jiexiu kiln refers to the kiln site in Hongshan Town, so it is also known as Hongshan kiln. In the Song and Jin dynasties, Jiexiu kiln burned white porcelain of high quality and large output, although inferior to Ding kiln and magnetic kiln in terms of historical influence, but the firing level in Shanxi region in the first place, but also on the surrounding kilns to have an important influence.

The history of Chinese ceramics, commented: "ceramics is a comprehensive product of science and art, it is both material products, but also spiritual products, it is at the same time for the material life of mankind and spiritual life services. Ceramic products of the shape, decoration, glaze color are related to the level of development of social economy and culture at that time, often from a certain side to reflect the ideology of the people at that time." [1] Jiexiu kiln in the development and evolution of successive generations formed a unique style, unearthed in the Song and Jin Dynasties Jiexiu kiln

ceramics on the decoration presents a unique artistic characteristics, not only reflects the way of life of the people of the time, but also to porcelain as a carrier, to the descendants of the cultural practices and aesthetic style.

## 2. Characteristics of elemental composition of decorative themes

### 2.1. The natural flavor under the folklore

Song people advocate elegance, prefer plants, the common people are also fond of flowers and plants planting, although the Jin people to fishing, hunting, nomadic, but after the domination of the Central Plains by the Han people gradually settled in farming culture, but also to the courtyard planting flowers and plants for the elegance of the people's living customs rich in ceramic decorative subject matter.

Jiexiu kiln ceramics flourished in the Song and Jin dynasties, one is affected by the culture of the above era, the second is due to the nature of the existence of folk kilns, by the folk culture is very influential, in the decorative themes are mostly based on people's daily lives of animals, plants and life scenes as a prototype, of which the plants are mainly in the peony, chrysanthemum, and lotus patterns, such as Jiexiu Museum collection of the Jin Dynasty white glaze engraved pillows (Figure 1), the center of the symmetry of the composition carved with the one-branched The peony flower is stylized in a symmetrical composition with a single branch. Its petals stretch exaggerated, smooth strokes, modeling and folk paper-cutting art is very similar, with a strong folk aesthetic interest. Another example is the Chrysanthemum Pillow in Brown Color on White Ground in the Yuncheng Museum (Figure 2), which appears in the form of a single chrysanthemum, with blossoming flowers and symmetrical and balanced foliage, with strong decorative motifs and the people's expectation of eliminating calamities and avoiding evil spirits, and of a long and healthy life. Animal subjects are commonly used bird patterns, fish patterns, life scenes in the decorative pattern of a baby play swinging boat pattern, is unique to the kiln in jiexiu pattern, full of natural flavor and the atmosphere of life.



Figure 1: White-glazed incised pillow of the Jin Dynasty[2]



Figure 2: Brown-colored chrysanthemum-patterned pillow on a white ground [3]

## 2.2. Poetry and painting in one text decoration

Text decoration is a unique method of ceramic decoration, the application of text decoration can make people more direct and clear expression of their creative intent, according to documentary evidence: the real "text" as the beginning of ceramic decoration originated in the Tang Dynasty Changsha kilns. In the Song and Jin Dynasties, the rapid development of science and technology, the ceramic industry flourished, coupled with the improvement of the status of the literati and scholarly class, text decoration was also widely used, and the Jiexiu kiln in the study and absorption of Changsha kiln on the basis of the formation of their own unique text decorations, which is broadly divided into pure text and poetry and painting combination of the two categories.

Pure text decoration is broadly divided into two kinds of single words and poems, single word decorations carved in the center of the bowl, or for the production of the line number or the producer's family name. Both with the role of marking the product "identity", but also for their own products to play an expanded role in publicity. Poetry decoration is a continuation of the single word decoration, in ceramics on the inscription of poems is the spiritual needs of the people of the figurative expression.

Poetry and painting combined with decorative verse content often used in realistic and lyrical poetry, its poetry content is diverse, longer, mostly used on porcelain pillows, while painting decorative content is common peony, lotus, pomegranate and so on, the craftsmen used painting, scratching and engraving techniques, these patterns carved on the pillow surface, and the combination of poetry and text, more apparent mood. Figure 3 is a round pillow with poems and pearls on a white ground from the Jiexiu kilns of the Jin Dynasty, and the picture consists of three parts. The middle part of the picture is engraved with four lines of poetic text, while two single pomegranate flowers are engraved on both sides of the text and lined with pearl ground. The sparseness and density are staggered, and the whole picture is both vivid and interesting.



Figure 3: Jin Dynasty round pillow with pearl ground and white poems [3]

## 2.3. Different compositions of the same subject

Jiexiu kiln ancient ceramics decorative pattern composition form is rich, the Song and Jin Dynasties Jiexiu kiln ceramics craftsmen often use different forms of composition to deal with the same subject matter, or according to the different shape of the same subject matter redesigned, in order to make the pattern to fit the shape of the vessel. Jiexiu kiln for the same subject matter of the composition of the overall can be divided into "the same draft heterogeneous" and "a draft multi-use" two forms.

"The same draft heterogeneous composition" refers to the same theme to take part of its form to change, so that the same pattern in different objects similar and not quite the same, although it is a small change, for the overall decoration of the object will also produce differences. For example, there are various forms of peony patterns on different ceramic wares with different patterns of black flower or hehua on white background in the Jiexiu kiln (Figure 4), and their branches and leaves are formed according to the shape of the wares. The form of its branches and leaves is adjusted and changed according to the shape of the wares, making the same pattern full of variations and interests.

"One draft for multiple uses" means that the same draft is reused on different wares, and the patterns are changed according to the different shapes of wares, and the position and layout of the

decorative patterns and the size of the painted area are all changed according to the shape of the wares, which is an example of the harmonious unity and organic combination of the wares and the decorations. For example, the white ochre flower series of the Jiexiu kiln (Figure 5) is decorated with bird feather patterns, and the craftsmen changed the bird feather patterns according to the width of the shoulders of the wares, thus forming different decorative effects.

"The same draft heterogeneous" and "a draft multi-purpose" principle of decorative patterns, in the jiexiu kiln wares on the decoration of the use of more, so that the same pattern in different wares shines differently on the luster, is the reasonable combination of ware and decoration of the model.



Figure 4: Peony pattern composition form (self-painted by the author)



Figure 5: White-ground ochre flower series wares[4]

### 3. Combination characteristics of pattern composition and layout

The traditional Chinese art of painting has a long history, and the Song Dynasty, as a new turn in China's traditional art of painting, saw the emergence of many new art schools with their own distinctive characteristics, and the boom of literature and art in all walks of life, which led to the flourishing of the art of painting. Influenced by this, the craftsmen of the time also have popular painting form applied to a variety of crafts. Song and Jin period jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative pattern is also deeply affected, such as folding branch composition form, installed hall flower "dense" and "full" decorative effect, fan flower style borrowing, etc., are used at the time of the painting expression to enrich the ceramic decoration.

#### 3.1. The Use of Folded Branch Compositional Forms

"Folding branch" is a classic pattern in Chinese bird and flower painting, which usually paints flowers without writing the whole plant, but only intercepts a branch or a number of twigs in the flowering season as the depiction of the object, so it is called "folding branch". In the Middle to Late Tang Dynasty, the form of the folded branch composition appeared, and Bian Luan began to paint the folded branch composition of flowers and birds (Figure 6). By the Five Dynasties, the folded branch painting method had become more common, and during the Song Dynasty, the folded branch flowers and birds had become the most common form of composition for painters.[4]

The ceramic decorative art of Jiexiu Kiln in the Song and Jin dynasties was influenced by the paintings at that time, and absorbed the form of folded branch composition, which was used in the ceramic decoration. Folded peony pattern is a common decoration in the ceramics of Jiexiu kilns, and the craftsmen of Jiexiu kilns chose the peony flower, which is the most popular among people, as the subject of decoration, and at the same time exaggerated the form of peony in the form of folded branch, and most of the decorations of this kind of themed artifacts are made in the form of a large and elegant peony head as the core of the main pattern, and the branches and leaves issued from the branch of the flower as the auxiliary support, which are suitable for decorations based on the shapes of the artifacts. For example, the white-on-black color folded branch flower cover box produced by the Jiexiu kiln (Figure 7) is decorated with black folded branch peonies, which vividly summarizes the form of a single peony, which is full of vitality and endless interesting meaning.



Figure 6: Folding Branches Composition of Flowers and Birds[5]



Figure 7: Folding Branches Flower Covered Box in Black Color on White Ground[2]

### 3.2. The use of "Dense" and "Full" for decorating hall flowers

The "Hall Flower" (or "Pavilion Flower") is one of the forms of Chinese bird and flower paintings, often used in decorative bird and flower paintings above the palace halls. The subject matter is mainly peonies and other flowers with auspicious symbols of wealth and prosperity, showing an aura of opulence and splendor[2]. In addition to giving people the feeling of grandeur, the "decorated flowers" also have the characteristics of "full" and "dense" because of its collection pattern formed



by a variety of symbols of artistic expression with many auspicious objects, and it is full with more than one symbol. The two characteristics are "full" and "dense".

The characteristics of the above mentioned mounted hall flower makes it has a strong decorative artistic effect and interest, applicable to most of the objects decorated, so this paradigm of decorative techniques also for the then jiexiu kiln borrowed, this "full", "dense" style applied in ceramic decoration achievement of the song Period of jiexiu kiln decoration pattern unique style style. For example, jiexiu kiln fired white glaze engraved ticking hundred fish pattern plum vase (Figure 8), its fish pattern for dense but reasonable arrangement, according to the shape of the object, the pattern around the body of the engraved in the object, pattern dense and exquisite, full of rhythm. This decorative form of "dense" and "full" drawn from the art of painting promoted the innovation and development of the decorative art of the Jiexiu kilns at that time.



Figure 8: White-glaze incised and carved prunus vase with a hundred fish design [4]

### 3.3. Group Fan Flower Style Expression

Fan refers to the silk woven material made of nearly round fan surface and longer handle composed of fan, because the fan surface of its nearly round system and the wheel system billet made of bowls, plates and other round objects similar to the shape, and smaller, and ceramic decorations with similarities, so it is widely used in the mesquite kiln ceramic decorations, in the bowls, plates, round pillows and other round objects are used, decorative techniques are diverse to painting, carving, scratching, ticking is more common. The decoration techniques are varied, with painting, carving, scratching and ticking being more common.

Peony is one of the common flower subjects in Song Dynasty fan paintings, mostly composed of a large peony in full bloom as the main body, surrounded by green leaves to set off, with its spare part left white and unadorned. The composition of this fan flower style was borrowed by the artisans of the Jiexiu kiln at that time, who refined and simplified the plant pattern in form, and the simplified pattern was changed according to the shape of different artifacts. For example, in the white-ground floral round pillow (Figure 9) fired at the Jiexiu kiln, the peony is left white inside, with a single full-bodied peony placed in it, surrounded by branches and leaves as a backdrop, and the white peony is contrasted with the colors of the branches, leaves and the body in order to present the decorative effect of the regimental fan flower.



Figure 9: Round pillow with floral motifs on a white ground[3]

## 4. Characteristics of the aesthetic pursuit of decorative pattern style

### 4.1. The Aesthetic Pursuit of Semi-Abstract Painting

"Semi-abstract" is a kind of painting expression between figuration and abstraction. It is different from figurative painting which pursues complete realism, and also different from pure abstraction which is highly generalized in the West and even completely detached from the original appearance of reality. Semi-abstract is in their original appearance on the basis of a certain degree of generalization of the object, both to retain the original characteristics of the thing, but also to break the original "stereotypes" of people on its things. [2]Song and Jin dynasty jiexiu kiln decorative pattern design mostly see this semi-abstract painting expression, as shown in figure 10, the Jin dynasty jiexiu kiln phoenix bird decoration to the abstract totem symbols, with curved lines that phoenix bird wings, round for the phoenix bird head, with very simple lines will be the phoenix bird form generalized, while not losing the characteristics of the bird. Such a form of painting decoration increases the possibility of different representations of the same thing, making the presentation of things more interesting and artistic.



Figure 10: Phoenix and bird motifs on ceramics from the Jiexiu kilns of the Jin Dynasty[3]

### 4.2. Aesthetic Expression of Lightness and Spirituality

The cultural fashions of an era deeply influence the aesthetic expressions of that era. In the Song Dynasty with a strong cultural atmosphere, people pursued Shangyi and elegance. This period of jiexiu kiln ceramic decoration of poetry, calligraphy, painting, seal and the literati inscription on ceramic objects, at this time the jiexiu kiln more than the production of monochrome white porcelain, decorative through the carving, hollowing and other techniques in the body of the production of simple and delicate pattern. [6]This decorative method through the content of the decorative subject matter of elegant and decorative techniques of streamlining, reflecting the Song period jiexiu kiln ceramics elegant and bright artistic decorative features.

By the end of the Jin Dynasty, the wares fired at the Jiexiu kilns were no longer dominated by a single black-and-white glaze, but by the largest number of brown colors on a white ground. Craftsmen used ochre-brown color to paint various patterns on the white make-up clay applied to the body. For example, the decorative pattern of the round jar with ochre flowers on a white ground (Figure 11) fired at the Jiexiu kiln in the Jin Dynasty is decorated with bird feather patterns, which are made in the form of an encirclement and adorned on the shoulders of the vessel. The lines of the bird feather pattern are smooth and sparse.

Whether it is the improvisation of poems under the influence of traditional painting, the drawing of various semi-abstract patterns under different themes, or the expression of shades and smooth lines, it can be seen that his decorative style is free and bright.



Figure 11: Ochre Flower Round Jar with White Ground[2]

#### 4.3. Human-centered aesthetic pursuit

During the Song Dynasty, Chinese painting reached its heyday as a result of economic prosperity. At the same time the growth of the urban civic class, the rapid development of handicrafts and the prosperity of urban commerce, so that the painting and the social masses to establish a more extensive and close contact. This period of jiexiu kiln burned with the people's daily life is closely related to the artifacts, not only pay attention to its function, and in the decorative pattern according to the social trend, the ceramic decorative pattern for enrichment, mostly with the people's life is closely related to the subject matter, will be the folklore and painting to do a combination. Such as common peony pattern, and for jiexiu kiln original baby play swing boat pattern, very life atmosphere. Both to meet the needs of the people and cater to the people's simple aesthetics, all aspects of the people's lives, but also reflects this period of jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative patterns people-oriented pursuit of aesthetic interest.

### 5. Analysis of the causes of the characteristics of ceramic decorative art of Jiexiu kiln in the Song and Jin Dynasties

#### 5.1. The Awakening of the Common Man and the Impact of Folk Culture

"Stable socio-economic development facilitated the development of cities, and the massive influx of people from the countryside into the cities and the sharp increase in the population contributed to the rise of urban culture, and folk and traditional cultural and sports activities naturally became active." [7] Along with the social stability of the Song dynasty, the increase in productivity and the rapid development of the commodity economy, urban residents were able to expand their forms of income, reduce their dependence on land and gain fuller personal freedom.

Therefore, in the course of their continuous development and growth, a unique culture, i.e., civilian culture, was formed. Against the background of such a civilian culture, the fine arts established a closer connection with the social masses than in previous generations. These commoners in the middle and lower classes of society were influenced by the living environment and customs, and their aesthetics were characterized by their own class, and they were more willing to express their aesthetic pleasure through the daily life and folk customs that were close to them.

Ceramics as one of the important daily life of the common people at that time, the aesthetic characteristics of its decoration by the influence of this folk culture. Therefore, jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative patterns in this period presents a strong natural flavor and life atmosphere.

#### 5.2. Integration and Innovation of Traditional Painting

Painting is a purely artistic expression that contributes to the cultural fashions of an era. Painting techniques, subject matter and forms of expression have deeply influenced other art categories of the era, not least ceramic decoration.



Song Dynasty economic prosperity, social stability, a strong cultural atmosphere, in such a background, a large number of outstanding talents in the field of literature and art, traditional painting has been unprecedented development. Ceramics, as a kind of practical objects closely related to the life of the time, the design of its decorative patterns will be influenced by the prevailing painting style. Craftsmen flexibly drew on the nutrients of painting and transformed them into unique ceramic decorative patterns according to the different objects.

Kaixiu kiln ceramic decoration in the extensive use of birds and flowers, folding branches and fan composition method of reference, painting and calligraphy in one form of creation and other aspects of the popular art of painting. So it can be seen, the traditional art of painting on jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative patterns of great significance, not only enriched the diversity of jiexiu kiln ceramic decorations, but also adds to the object of interest and innovation, is the formation of jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative art characteristics of one of the important factors.

### 5.3. Influence of the aesthetic idea of "the beauty of kudo"

Su Shi put forward the "wither and tantalizing beauty" is an important part of the aesthetic thought of the Song Dynasty, his interpretation of the term "wither and tantalizing" as: "wither on the outside but cream in the middle, seemingly light but actually beautiful". He interpreted the word "ku-tan" as "withered on the outside but creamy in the middle, seemingly bland but beautiful in reality", meaning that the exterior is ordinary or even simple, but the interior is rich. [8] This aesthetic thought was based on the promotion of Laozhuang's thought, and had a profound impact on the culture and art of the Song and Jin dynasties.[9]

The people of the Northern Song Dynasty live in peace, under the policy of emphasizing culture and military, the Northern Song Dynasty culture and art reached a peak, people do not want luxury, advocate the beauty of nature, the pursuit of natural charm, its simple and introverted aesthetic thought influenced the style of ceramic decoration.

At the same time, the Jin Dynasty Jiexiu kiln is also in the shape of its artifacts beauty, functional beauty and natural beauty along the Northern Song Dynasty, "the beauty of the Kutan" aesthetic ideas. Such as jiexiu kiln commonly used flowers, birds, plants and other daily visible objects as the main decorative elements of their wares, and then the baby play pattern is also one of the favorite themes of jiexiu kiln, the baby playing scene vivid and lively, to the children's daily play as the main picture, few strokes out of the children's lifelike appearance, full of rich life and wither and tanya of beauty.

## 6. Conclusion

Porcelain has always occupied an important position in Chinese history and culture, the decorative patterns of a piece of artifacts not only cohesion of the value of the technology and material technology, but also convergence of calligraphy, poetry, painting in one, carrying an era of development trajectory. Through the study of jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative patterns, we can more intuitively understand the period of jiexiu folk culture, social customs and aesthetic concepts of artifacts produced by the impact. In conclusion, from the jiexiu kiln ceramic decorative pattern art, we can not only see the rich pattern subject matter and design techniques, but also can be seen from the change of lifestyle, the development of science and technology level and the improvement of artistic aesthetic concepts and other cultural environment associated with all the factors of the formation and development, to experience the spiritual culture contained in the pattern, for the modern design of decorative patterns to provide a new way of thinking and enlightenment. The design of modern decorative patterns provides a new way of thinking and inspiration.

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